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ABSTRACT

Creativity is generally considered an attribute that everyone possesses to some degree and which can be nourished in the proper educational environment. This research project investigated conditions related to creativity development in preschools in Macedonia, operating with the hypothesis that optimal conditions for such development have not been achieved there. Categories used in the examination of creative conditions included characteristics of the curriculum, teaching style, available materials, social relations between the educators and children, and teachers' attitudes toward creativity. Content analysis, observation, and a survey confirmed the hypothesis. Although children's free time included numerous creative activities, such as dramatization, narration, and art and modeling, directed activities in various school subjects were more rigidly conducted, with children allowed little decision-making power. Teachers overwhelmingly believed that preschool children possess creativity, but the use of creative teaching techniques was related to the educational level of the teacher, with university-educated teachers most likely to incorporate creativity. Results indicated a need to revise the state's curriculum program and to encourage instruction in creative pedagogy during teacher education. (EV)

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CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY IN THE PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS IN MACEDONIA

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Introduction

Lately, the problem of creativity has acquired a greater importance and vitality in all areas of man's activities. Creativity has been studied from different positions not only because of the various engagements and cognition of researchers what it should represents, but also because of its manifold nature. Nevertheless, the psychological aspects of this problem are the ones that have been generally studied. The research reported on this article focused on the field of educational work. The presumptions significant for the development of child's creativity have been investigated at the very first level of education realised in preschool institutions.

There does not exist a worked-out strategy for developing children's creativity, in our country. Neither can we say that there is a tradition in the preparation of such preschool programmes. The incomplete theoretical rudiments and the underdeveloped research work in this area indicate the significance of this research and the need of introducing a whole range of further research of the genre.

First of all, it was the theoretical analysis of the problem that led us to answers like: what kind of social conditions are convenient for creativity, what kind of social climate is incentive, and what are the mechanisms that can encumber or cancel the production of imaginative ideas. Raising creative people is possible in tolerant society where there is a dialogue with the individual, where the material conditions for backing up the research work are existing, and in society in which science, culture, and art are adequately appraised.

Society endeavouring for top-quality development must be flexible and fast in accepting and implementing innovations in practice, in assisting

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research and development units, in undertaking activities and measures with the aim of supporting and awarding creative individuals. The first steps of this kind should be done in the sphere of education. The hitherto preferring of mediocrity and collective spirit placed the creative persons, the talented children in an unjust position. The "exceptional" children have the right to an "exceptional" curriculum and they must not be left to chance. Therefore, it is necessary to work out a strategy that will help detecting, identifying, following, stimulating, and supporting them in their development, starting from the very beginning of their education - preschool education.

Theoretical frame of the study

There have been numerous attempts for defining creativity, for uncovering the essence of the creative process, as well as for identifying the characteristics of the creative persons throughout ages. Various assessments have been distinguished - starting from the oldest religious mystical interpretations of creativity as a characteristic of gods and a few elected individuals of mankind, up to some modern theories based on more human positions. Here are a few examples for defining creativity as a result of various research:

> "The ability to see the new relation ships, to produce unusual ideas and to deviate from traditional pattern of thinking." (Eysenck, 1972)
>
> "...mental processes that lead to solutions, ideas, conceptualization, artistic forms, theories or products that are unique and novel." (Reber, 1985)
>
> "According to wider criteria from the above mentioned .... you may speak about creative thinking and creative work after one has reached certain solutions that are not mere copies of previous one's own or someone else's opinions, therefore they do not have to be of general social value" (Potkonjak and Simlesa, 1989)

Apart from the present differences in the standpoints of the current researchers in creativity, there still is a *common* feature in modern understanding of creativity, that is to say it is treated as a natural, generic and universal characteristic. That is the optimistic belief that each individual possesses a certain creative potential, smaller or greater, given to him as inheritance but the degree and method of its development depend on the surrounding conditions. Therefore, creativity, alike intelligence, is the dimension apportioned within the framework of a certain mediocrity with the major part of population. People who are extraordinary gifted "creators" are of a relatively small number, and there is a relatively low number of people with an exclusively low degree of it. In congruence with this assessment we have also defined creativity as a general characteristic of the human being that helps him to behave, to contemplate and to create in his own, original way.

Creativity appears in early childhood and it is definitely influenced by several factors: the interest of the parents for improving this characteristic, their tolerance, the conditions and the relations in the family, the personality

of the educator in the preschool institution and undoubtedly, the presence of suitable educational programmes for such kind of work with preschool children.

The design and methods of the study

The object of the research were the conditions for the development of creativity in children in preschool institutions. We have used numerous categories in examining and defining the conditions for creative work:

1. Characteristics of the curriculum: stiff, elastic, it narrows or it broadens the possibilities for creative work;
2. Definition of the goals: clear, specific, operational, measurable or typical, long-termed, stereotypical;
3. The number, presence and location of goals, tasks and contents of a creative character in the programmes of separate educational domains;
4. Organisation of educational process in preschool institutions: elastic, stiff, more liberated or rigid daily administration, grouping of children strictly according to age or according to other more elastic criterion, position of the child in the activities, the selection of activities and their timetable;
5. The style of work of the teacher: democratic, authoritarian, anarchy, flexible, rigid, tolerant, the forms and methods of applied work;
6. Material prerequisites: space and equipment, modern or classical means;
7. Activities of the children: creative and uncreative, verbal, non-verbal, creative games and work, researching activities, practical manipulation, passive receptiveness of impressions;
8. Social and emotional relations between the educators and the children: mutual confidence, equality, spontaneity, tenderness, understanding, support, fear, insecurity, shame;
9. The attitude of the educators in relation to children's creativity, their knowledge and motivation for a creative work with the children;

Congruent to the set goals and tasks, a number of research techniques was used in the research:

1. Content analysis of the official Programme of the Educational Activities for Preschool Education (Ilporpama, 1982), which revealed the quantity and quality of the program
2. Objectives and contents convenient for creative work; (5 preparing groups)

3. Systematic observation of the educational process in preschool institutions, defining the presence of creative activities with children and teachers in the current educational process in kindergartens, as well as the conditions for its realization, outlining the specific characteristics of the organisation, the forms and methods of work in free and directed activities (108 teachers)

4. Survey research by questioning and grading the attitudes, opinions and judgements of the teachers related to separate components of children's creativity.

In our research we started from the general hypothesis that optimal conditions for the development of children's creativity had not been provided in institutional preschool education. We confirmed this general hypothesis through the verification of a number of particular hypothesis.

The results

The quantity and quality of Content Analysis

The analysis of the contents of the Programme confirmed our hypothesis on the scant presence of assignments and contents suitable for creative work of children and teachers. Using a specially constructed memo pad for the analysis we came to know the general characteristics of the Programme in a sense that it is exceedingly universal, stereotypical and inoperational. Moreover, we obtained information on the presence of concrete programme tasks and contents in the function of creativity within the framework of separate educational domains. Firstly, a priority was put on the games and free activities, which is positive and significant, especially concerning the development of creative features. A number of creative and constructive games and plays have been comprised. However, there is a completely different situation in the six programme domains which represent a kind of precursor of elementary foundations of the subjects studied at the elementary schools. Only the domains of linguistic culture, the studies of music and arts, have a sufficient number of assignments in favour of creativity; there are some general notions in the domain of nature study, while there are almost none in the domains of mathematics and gymnastics. This should not lead to the conclusion that the mentioned domains do not have possibilities for creative activation of children. On the contrary, both of them are rich with contents of creative work. Therefore, in the future, the authors of the programmes should emphasise not only the objectives and assignments but also the methods and ways for making the children creative. This is particularly necessary in the domain of mathematics, because it is more abstract,

more subtle, and greater knowledge and professionalism are required from the teacher for its realization.

Obviously, the programme has greater influence on the practical organisation and realization of the educational process in the preschool institutions, because by systematic observation of the free and directed activities, we got results which were mainly compatible with the previous ones. Systematic observation helped us to get direct insight in the substantial reality of pedagogy and in the conditions that promote and manifest children's creativity. All observations were done with the help of specially constructed records of the check-list type which contained categories of behaviour of the educators and the children relevant to the research-problem. The sample of the preschool institutions under observation had the characteristics of a simple random sample. On an average, five preparing groups from five preschool institutions in the Republic were observed. The records for mapping out the free and directed activities were not identical because of the specific features of the one and the other type of activities. Both forms contained tables and columns which had to reveal the organization, the presence and the types of educational situations in which the children were engaged in creative activities, the applied methods and forms, as well as the social and emotional relations between the teachers and children in the group.

The objectives and contents for creative work-observation

The analyses of the results obtained with systematic observation confirmed two hypotheses of the research: first, the creative activities of the children and the educators are not present enough in the process of education in preschool institutions, and second, the conditions, the possibilities for making the children creative, are more appropriate in the free than in the directed activities.

According to the data presented on the graph, approximately half of the time for directed activities, or more exactly in 54.5 % of the cases, the children are creatively active, they do research or demonstrate their creativity verbally.

Table 1. Types of Children's Directed Activities.

DIRECTED ACTIVITIES	%
Non-creative Activities	45.5
Verbal Creative Activities	32.2
Creative Work	11.3
Creative Games	8.6
Research Activities	2.4

Information on Tab. 1 indicates the fact that the greatest percentage of children's creative activities is in the verbal domain, which comprise various exercises for children's verbal creativity. That is also in concordance with the teachers' attitudes that the linguistic culture domain (along with art education) encloses a great number of programmes and real possibilities for the development of children's creativity. Besides moderate presence of creative work and creative games, there is also extremely low presence of researching activities by the children (only 2.4 % of the total activities). The researching activities help the child to come to its own discoveries and new proficiencies. They urge curiosity, develop observing abilities, systematization, breed original thinking and independence. These are, de facto, good enough reasons for greater presence of researching activities in the creative work of the children. The systematic observation of children's free activities in the preschool institutions indicated that they offered better conditions for making the children creative, compared to the directed activities. Graphic representation 2 indicates the relation between the creative and non-creative children's activities within the framework of free activities:

The results indicate that there is little advantage in favour of the creative activities. Although the 57.8 % presence of creative activities can't be considered sufficient, nevertheless the correlation between creative and non-creative is more in favour of the free than of the directed activities.

The creative activities of the children within the framework of free activities are much more abundant. As shown in Tab. 2, the most frequent types of free activities are the constructive games of the children with shaped and semi-shaped materials (26.8 %).

Table 2. Types of Children's Free Activities

FREE ACTIVITIES	%
Non-creative Activities	42.2
Constructive games	26.8
Art and Modelling	12.2
Discussion	5.4
Dramatisation	5.3
Narration	4.5

Artistic creation is of a relatively high percentage, as well as modelling (12.2 %); numerous varieties of verbal creative activities have been noticed, for instance: dramatization (5.3 %), listening to stories and narration (4.5 %), plays (3.5 %), and so on. The present 42.2 % cases of free activities and the 45.5 % of directed activities in which the children are not creatively active, as well as the information that 2-9 % of the children are totally unengaged and are simply "quiet", prove our hypothesis about insufficient creative activities.

The other data obtained with the form refer to the ways, the methods used by the teacher, in relation to the position of the child and its possibility of deciding on the choice, the type of the activity it wants to be engaged in, the choice of means, space and playmate, as well as the data on the social and emotional relations between the teachers and the children. They were all in favour of the hypothesis that the conditions for making the children creative are more favourable in the area of free than in the area of directed activities. As an illustration we can present the information that in the directed activities there has nearly been no case when the teacher gives up the plan due to momentary desires of the children, his (the educator's) domination

is, more over, expressed in the choice of the means and space for play. The children are left the possibility of choosing the playmate only. In free activities the situation is much more favourable. The leading role is left to the children, and in most cases they are independent in the decision making about the type of the activity, the means they want to play with, and their playmate.

The attitudes of the teachers - a survey

The third objective of the research was to examine the attitudes of the kindergarten teachers toward creativity. In the survey we used a stratified random sample. The questionnaires were applied to 108 teachers from four towns in the Republic of Macedonia: Skopje (central district and the suburb district of Gazi Baba), Bitola (western Macedonia), Stip and Radovis (eastern Macedonia). The sample referred to 15.43 % of the total number of teachers in Macedonia.

The sample is comprised of relevant categories of population of different educational degree and different working experience. With the help of the questionnaires-scalers, we came to data about the opinions and attitudes of the teachers regarding several issues, such as the following:

- the importance of diverse factors in the development of children's creativity and their influence;
- preferences in the style of work by the teachers;
- motives for accepting the creative style of work;
- the degree of teacher's ability for creative work;
- the results obtained by the creative teachers;
- the conditions and the possibilities for practical realization of new ideas, the difficulties and obstacles they are facing;
- the possibilities offered in the programme, the objective conditions for the realization of
- the programme tasks concerning of creativity, and so on.

From all the information and perception we got with the research, we shall single out a smaller part directly related to our hypotheses.

First of all, the hypotheses about the positive attitude of the teachers toward the phenomenon - children's creativity.

Table 3. Teacher's Attitudes Toward Children's Creativity.

CREATIVITY OF THE PRE-SCHOOLCHILDREN	%
Positive	97.2
Negative	0.9
Unknown	1.8

Up to 97.2 % of those questioned gave a positive answer to the question whether it is at all possible to talk about the creativity of preschool children, and only 0.92 % gave a negative answer, while 1.85% answered they did not know whether there is such a feature at the preschool age. These data are not only in favour of the hypothesis, they also indicate the optimism of the teachers that creativity exists, which presents a condition and a motive for fostering and urging it up.

The hypothesis that a majority of the teachers prefer the creative style of work was also confirmed.

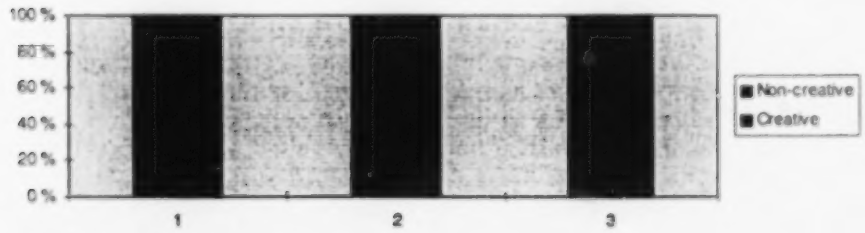
Table 4. The Style of Work Preferred by the Teachers.

PREFERRED STYLE OF WORK	%
Creative	69.4
Traditional	30.5

In concordance with the obtained data seven tenths or 69.44 % of the teachers preferred the creative, innovative style of work, while 30.55 % practise the traditional style. Although the creative ones are in majority, there is a high percentage of those who stick to the conservative, traditional style of work. This fact speaks for itself about the insufficient modernisation of pedagogy and the modern educational goals. In analysing the conditions of the attitudes of those questioned we came to a conclusion that the teachers with a higher education degree mostly prefer the creative style of work. The results are given in the graphic representation:

Table 5. The style of work of the teachers and their education degree.

PREFERRED STYLE OF WORK	DEGREE OF EDUCATION		
	intermediate	high	university
Creative	37.5	70.9	6.2
Traditional	62.5	29.1	23.8



1. Educators with intermediate education
2. Educators with high education
3. Educators with university education

According the data, the first category of intermediate teachers, which represents slightly over one third of the questioned (37.5 %), prefer the creative style, and almost two thirds prefer the traditional. It is vice versa with the teachers with high education, because 70.88 % of them prefer the creative, and 29.11 % the traditional style. It is even more expressed with the university level teachers. Three quarters or 76.19 % of the teachers prefer the creative, and slightly less than one quarter or 23.81 % prefers the traditional (conservative) style.

The data are in favour of the theoretical and empirical knowledge that teachers with less education don't decide easily for anything new and unheard-off while those with a higher level of education more often practise the inventive, creative pedagogy. It means that one of the conditions for fostering creativity in preschool institutions is to provide university degree education for teachers in preschool education.

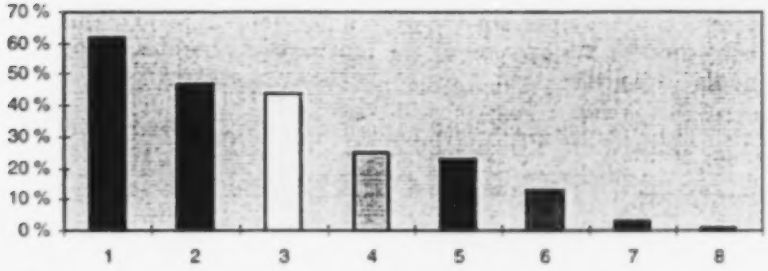
The calculations demonstrated that the difference is not statistically important. By *linking* the categories of high and university level the difference is significant on the level 0.05. The calculations are as follows

X2= 4,16

X2 0,05 (m=l) = 3,85

As regards the motives for creative work, the assumption that the inner (intrinsic) motives prevail with the teachers was confirmed. The ranking of the answers given by those questioned gave the following results:

MOTIVES



1. To match the scientific discoveries in education
2. To develop and simulate creativity in their pupils
3. Personal desire and inspiration
4. Meeting the requests of the society
5. Work can be thus promoted
6. Factors of the kindergartens
7. The others work in such a way
8. Getting acknowledgment

The primary motive of the majority number of those questioned, that is 62.04 %, was "the wish to match the scientific discoveries in educational work". On the second place (47.22 %) was the teachers' motive to develop

and stimulate creativity in their pupils. On a close third place (45.37 %) was the motive for looking for something new and different based on the personal desires and inspirations of the teachers. After that, there came the motives for meeting the requests of society (25,00 %), the belief that the work can be thus promoted (23.15 %), and the requests made by the factors of the kindergartens represented a motive for 12.04 % of those questioned. In our opinion the belief that creative work leads to good results should, as a motive reach a higher position, and it should not drag behind the motives for meeting the demands of society.

The scarce presence of extrinsic motives demonstrates that the times of introducing innovations for the sake of appraisals and acknowledgements or as a kind of competition between colleagues-teachers, have past.

With the survey of the opinions and attitudes of the teachers we found more about the problem of creativity. For instance, the teachers gave different assessments about the role of separate factors in the development of children's creativity. They gave the primary importance to the factor of inheritance, that is the natural talent. Then the surrounding factors ranked as follows: family, teacher, surroundings, radio and television broadcast, and picture books as the least important factor. The ranking list about the difficulties the teachers face in fulfilling creative work with the children was as follows: bad equipment in preschool institutions, lack of professional assistance from competent institutions, and bad (insufficient) information.

The most significant sources used by the teachers in their creative work with the children are the professional pedagogic literature, the organised forms of advanced professional training and exchange of experience with the colleagues. Less important and scarce information sources for creative work, according to the opinion of the teachers are regular schooling and mass media (radio, television, press).

Conclusions

The research diagnosed several weak points in the present system of preschool education, thus some possible directions were indicated for its alteration. First of all, it is necessary to revise the Programme by renouncing the declarative, stereotypical objectives, and to introduce contents suitable for creative work in the programmes of all areas. It is also necessary to innovate the educational process in relation to its position, organization, timetable of activities, forms and methods of work, and the third, and perhaps the most important matter is to instruct professional teachers for creative pedagogy work starting from regular schooling onwards throughout their whole working years.

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